

## READERS' FORUM

### BUSINESS IS BUSINESS!

*Editor of CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE*—Enterprise in business is to be both admired and praised under normal circumstances. But when it gets to the limit of a mail order house shipping a "blank cartridge pistol" together with plenty of cartridges to a child in a ward in a hospital free bed, and then making a collect charge for express against the hospital, we think it about time to protest.

A package so wrapped as to disclose nothing of its contents and addressed to Melvin B. —, Saint Joseph's Hospital, San Francisco, California, came by express to the hospital, with a collect charge of 64 cents on it. Thinking the package contained something useful, the hospital paid the charges.

A boy of 12, seriously ill for a year in a hospital and confined to bed or wheelchair, a nonpaying patient, ordered the pistol by mail out of such money as he had been hoarding for a year. Inside the package was the firm name of Johnson Smith & Co., Racine, Wisconsin.

The shipper of this package knew that it was going to a hospital. Perhaps that is why the cartridge boxes bore this legend: "Loaded with a special grade of powder giving the loudest possible report."

It seems rather worse than an affront for a mail order house to inveigle a hospital into paying 64 cents express charges to deliver a 50-cent pistol (that being the price according to the enclosed list), and for a nonpay patient.

The attending surgeon came in just as the patient was preparing to load and fire. A powder burn from this toy can destroy eyes, disfigure faces, and the powder burns from such nuisances frequently produce tetanus.

ETHAN H. SMITH, M. D.

Sonoma, California, June 11, 1926.

*Dear Editor*—Kindly permit me to congratulate you on the splendid journal you are giving to the medical profession. It gives to its readers help, service, knowledge, inspiration, pleasure, and points out not only the good, the strong, and the lovable points in our calling, but also our shortcomings and our weak points.

Enclosed please find my check for renewal, and allow me to thank you for the good I have received by reading your journal.

S. BOOLSEN, M. D.

The following extracts from an article by W. R. P. Emerson (Am. Jour. Med. Sciences) carry an important message to all physicians:

The health problem aside from its end result—disease—is left largely to the mercies of anyone who may chance to be interested in it—no man's land—where is found the dietitian, physical educator, social worker, teacher, and others who in a well-organized health plan would be valuable aids and adjuncts.

The victim of this condition of affairs is the growing child and back of it loom sickness and death—a morbidity and mortality that increase with the complexities of modern life.

As yet school organization has been little affected by any serious attempt to meet the health needs of the child. The desirability of doing something in this direction is felt to some degree but the school authorities have gone no farther than to lessen their sense of responsibility by preaching health to pupils who by their own efforts alone are practically helpless. A great wave of printed matter has inundated teachers, affording them general information on many aspects of living and this must be passed on to their charges.

"Learning by doing" has influenced the school authorities and this has led to health chores and other devices for getting the new material over into the life of the child. Great organizations have capitalized this situation and its possibilities. For example, I have before me the in-

structions of an organization which has highly developed machinery for entering thousands of schools and homes. The first attack consists of requiring the child to perform eleven daily chores. By doing these he may expect to become well and strong. The chores range from the simple matters, such as carrying a clean handkerchief, to the more difficult one of having a bowel movement every day although no directions are given for finding and removing causes of constipation. The eleven chores, however, are only the beginning of the process, for directions go on in some forty-five separate pages of printed matter with extensive elaboration through a second, third and fourth series—something of a hygienic *cum laude* cumulation ending with a Phi Beta Kappa which calls for eternal vigilance in such matters as neatness of appearance; keeping surroundings sightly and sanitary; personal control of ventilation and temperature; cheerfulness, straightforwardness, cleanmindedness, doing one thing at a time and the most important first; care for the health of others; playing fair; kind acts; a balanced diet; reading matter held twelve inches from the eyes; proper attention to elimination; deep breathing; sleeping without a pillow; washing hair and scalp!

This bewildering rolling up of hygienic proprieties reminds one of the details of the Mosaic code, only that was not taken all at once.

Rules which call for drinking as much milk as possible are not sound because the using of milk to quench thirst is bad practice, as is also the continuation of a liquid diet after infancy. Another of the commandments is "Drink at least four glasses of water a day." Here again no account is taken of the very common practice of washing food down with water and if the child takes as much as a quart of milk a day eight glasses of liquids is excessive. The last of the list is "A bowel movement every morning." Consequently large numbers of children form the habit of taking physic, suppositories or enemas, every day of their lives in order to secure this result.

"Testimonials" from children are published and given as wide circulation as has been given those for patent medicines. Here are samples published by the staff of a state public health association. A boy in the fourth grade writes, "My face was pale and white and I started eating cabbage, carrots, radishes, corn and potatoes, and now I have a good color." The boy goes on to say, "I got into the habit of going to bed at seven o'clock and getting up at six o'clock by wanting to be able to mark my score card. . . . I did my chores twelve weeks and didn't forget a clean handkerchief once. Because I did my chores I got a squire's pin." Another boy—age not given—writes, "I wash my hair with emulsified cocoanut oil at least once a month. If you had done this, grandpa, you would not have been baldheaded. I am never going to grow old for I take physical exercises daily and sit in good position that my bones may grow properly." Again, "I had the toothache before I started to do the chores but afterward I did not." And, "If you eat good food you will be well and strong." It is a girl of eleven who writes, "I adore washing handkerchiefs so I do not mind the fourth chore at all."

To tell a child, "Do this and you will be well" is cruel. There is no greater fallacy taught under the guise of medical advice. The effect of the chore system as now used is to sanction expectations from certain practices which are entirely out of accord with experience and accurate knowledge. The child asks for health and he is given a medal! This is not honest treatment and amounts to a betrayal of his confidence. One of the end results of such methods is clearly seen in the reaction of the high school boy or girl who has reached the stage where he decides that all this health activity is "bunk" and he will have nothing to do with it.

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You can't kick people into being nice to you. You can earn their respect and co-operation, and your value to the community will be increased thereby.—Ohio Health News, May 1, 1926.

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There's now a car to every five people, which should limit each driver to four pedestrians.—Manila Bulletin.